

presence of you in this crowd and those whom you represent that on the edge of a new century, she's still right.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The White House Millennium Evening began at 7:35 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. The panelists participating in the program, entitled "Women as Citizens: Vital Voices Through the Century," were: Alice Kessler-Harris, professor, Columbia University; Nancy Cott, professor, Yale University; and Ruth Sim-

mons, president, Smith College. In his remarks, the President referred to Deborah Tannen, professor, Georgetown University; Vicky LeBlanc, attorney in Delafield, WI; and Eleanor Smeal, president, Feminist Majority. The discussion following the panelists was moderated by Ellen Lovell, Director, White House Millennium Council. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady and the panelists and the question-and-answer portion of the evening. The lecture was cybercast on the Internet.

## Remarks to the Conference on United States-Africa Partnership for the 21st Century

*March 16, 1999*

Thank you. Good morning. Let me say, first of all, to Minister Ouedraogo, thank you for your fine address and for your leadership. Secretary General Salim, Secretary-General Annan, Secretary Albright, to our distinguished ministers and ambassadors and other officials from 46 African nations and the representatives of the Cabinet and the United States Government. I am delighted to see you all here today. We are honored by your presence in the United States and excited about what it means for our common future.

A year ago next week I set out on my journey to Africa. It was, for me, for my wife, and for many people who took that trip, an utterly unforgettable and profoundly moving experience. I went to Africa in the hope not only that I would learn but that the process of the trip itself and the publicity that our friends in the press would give it would cause Americans and Africans to see each other in a new light, not denying the lingering effects of slavery, colonialism, the cold war, but to focus on a new future, to build a new chapter of history, a new era of genuine partnership.

A year later, we have to say there has been a fair measure of hope, and some new disappointments. War still tears at the heart of Africa. Congo, Sierra Leone, Angola, Sudan have not yet resolved their conflicts. Ethiopia and Eritrea are mired in a truly tragic dispute we have done our best to try to help avoid. Violence still steals innocent lives in the Great Lakes re-

gion. In the last year, Nairobi and Dar es Salaam became battlefields in a terrorist campaign that killed and wounded thousands of Africans, along with Americans working there for a different future.

But there have also been promising new developments. The recent elections in Nigeria give Africa's most populous country, finally, a chance to realize its enormous potential. It's transition may not be complete, but let's not forget, just a year ago it was unthinkable. This June, for the first time, South Africa will transfer power from one fully democratic government to another.

More than half the sub-Saharan nations are now governed by elected leaders. Many, such as Benin, Mali, and Tanzania, have fully embraced open government and open markets. Quite a few have recorded strong economic growth, including Mozambique, crippled by civil war not long ago. Ghana's economy has grown by 5 percent a year since 1992.

All of you here have contributed to this progress. All are eager to make the next century better than the last. You share a great responsibility, for you are the architects of Africa's future.

Today I would like to talk about the tangible ways we can move forward with our partnership. Since our trip to Africa, my administration has worked hard to do more. We've created a \$120 million educational initiative to link schools in Africa to schools in this country. We've created

the Great Lakes Justice Initiative to attack the culture of impunity. We have launched a safe skies initiative to increase air links between Africa and the rest of the world; given \$30 million to protect food security in Africa and more to be provided during this year. In my budget submission to Congress I have asked for additional funds to cover the cost of relieving another \$237 million in African debt on top of the \$245 million covered in this year's appropriation.

We're working hard with you to bring an end to the armed conflicts which claim innocent lives and block economic progress, conducting extensive shuttle diplomacy in an effort to resolve the dispute between Ethiopia and Eritrea. In Sierra Leone, we're doing what we can to reduce suffering and forge a lasting peace. We have provided \$75 million in humanitarian assistance over the last 18 months. And with the approval of Congress we will triple our long-standing commitment of support for ECOMOG to conduct regional peacekeeping.

We have also done what we can to build the African Crisis Response Initiative, with members of our military cooperating with African militaries. We've provided \$8 million since 1993 to the OAU's Conflict Management Center to support African efforts to resolve disputes and end small conflicts before they explode into large ones.

Nonetheless, we have a lot of ground to make up. For too much of this century, the relationship between the United States and Africa was plagued by indifference on our part. This conference represents an unparalleled opportunity to raise our growing cooperation to the next level. During the next few days we want to talk about how these programs work and hear from you about how we can do better. Eight members of my Cabinet will meet their African counterparts. The message I want your leaders to take home is, this is a partnership with substance, backed by a long-term commitment.

This is truly a relationship for the long haul. We have been too separate and too unequal. We must end that by building a better common future. We need to strive together to do better, with a clear vision of what we want to achieve over the long run. Ten years from now, we want to see more growth rates above 5 percent. A generation from now, we want to see a larger middle class, more jobs and consumers, more African exports, thriving schools filled with chil-

dren—boys and girls—with high expectations and a reasonable chance of fulfilling them.

But we need the tools to get there, the tools of aid, trade, and investment. As I said when I was in Africa, this must not be a choice between aid and trade; we must have both. In my budget request for the next fiscal year, I've asked for an increase of 10 percent in development assistance to Africa. But the aid is about quality and quantity. Our aid programs are developed with your involvement, designed to develop the institutions needed to sustain democracy and to reduce poverty and to increase independence.

To expand opportunity, we also need trade. Our administration strongly supports the "Africa Growth and Opportunity Act," which I said in my State of the Union Address we will work to pass in this session of Congress. The act represents the first step in creating, for the first time in our history, a genuine framework for U.S.-Africa trade relations. It provides immediate benefits to nations modernizing their economies, and offers incentives to others to do the same. It increases U.S. assistance, targeting it where it will do the most good.

The bill clearly will benefit both Africa and the United States. Africans ask for more access to our markets; this bill provides that. You asked that GSP benefits be extended; this bill extends them for 10 years. You said you need more private investment; this bill calls for the creation of two equity investment funds by OPIC, providing up to \$650 million to generate private investment in Africa.

We agree that labor concerns are important. This bill removes GSP benefits for any country found to be denying worker rights. You told us we needed to understand more about your views on development. This bill provides a forum for high-level dialog and cooperation.

It is a principled and pragmatic approach based on what will work. No one is saying it will be easy, but we are resolved to help lower the hurdles left by past mistakes. I believe it represents a strong, achievable, and important step forward. There are many friends of Africa in Congress and many strong opinions about how best to help Africa. I hope they will quickly find consensus. We cannot afford a house divided. Africa needs action now.

There's another crucial way the United States can hasten Africa's integration. One of the most serious issues we must deal with together, and

one of truly global importance, is debt relief. Today I ask the international community to take actions which could result in forgiving \$70 billion in global debt relief—global debt. Our goal is to ensure that no country committed to fundamental reform is left with a debt burden that keeps it from meeting its people's basic human needs and spurring growth. We should provide extraordinary relief for countries making extraordinary effort to build working economies.

To achieve this goal, in consultation with our Congress and within the framework of our balanced budget, I proposed that we make significant improvements to the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries initiative at the Cologne Summit of the G-7 in June: first, a new focus on early relief by international financial institutions, which now reduce debt only at the end of the HIPC program. Combined with ongoing forgiveness of cash flows by the Paris Club, this will substantially accelerate relief from debt payment burden.

Second, the complete forgiveness of all bilateral concessional loans to the poorest countries.

Third, deeper and broader reduction of other bilateral debts, raising the amount to 90 percent.

Fourth, to avoid recurring debt problems, donor countries should commit to provide at least 90 percent of new development assistance on a grant basis to countries eligible for debt reduction.

Fifth, new approaches to help countries emerging from conflicts that have not had the chance to establish reform records, and need immediate relief and concessional finance.

And sixth, support for gold sales by the IMF to do its part, and additional contributions by us and other countries to the World Bank's trust fund to help meet the cost of this initiative.

Finally, we should be prepared to provide even greater relief in exceptional cases where it could make a real difference.

What I am proposing is debt reduction that is deeper and faster. It is demanding, but to put it simply, the more debtor nations take responsibility for pursuing sound economic policies, the more creditor nations must be willing to provide debt relief.

One of the best days of my trip last year was the day I opened an investment center in Johannesburg, named after our late Commerce Secretary, Ron Brown, a true visionary who knew that peace, democracy, and prosperity would grow in Africa with the right kind of

support. I can't think of a better tribute to him than our work here today, for he understood that Africa's transformation will not happen overnight but, on the other hand, that it should happen and that it could happen.

Look at Latin America's progress over the last decade. Look at Asia before that. In each case, the same formula worked: Peace, open markets, democracy, and hard work lifted hundreds of millions of people from poverty. It has nothing to do with latitude and longitude or religion or race. It has everything to do with an equal chance and smart decisions.

There are a thousand reasons Africa and the United States should work together for the 21st century, reasons buried deep in our past, reasons apparent in the future just ahead. It is the right thing to do, and it is in the self-interest of all the peoples represented in this room today. Africa obviously matters to the 30 million Americans who trace their roots there. But Africa matters to all Americans. It provides 13 percent of our oil, nearly as much as the Middle East. Over 100,000 American jobs depend upon our exports to Africa; there could be millions more when Africa realizes its potential. As Africa grows it will need what we produce, and we will need what Africa produces.

Africa is home to 700 million people, nearly a fifth of the world. Last year our growing relationship with this enormous market helped to protect the United States from the global financial crisis raging elsewhere. While exports were down in other parts of the world, exports from the United States to Africa actually went up by 8 percent, topping \$6 billion. As wise investors have discovered, investments in Africa pay. In 1997 the rate of return of American investments in Africa was 36 percent, compared with 16 percent in Asia, 14 percent worldwide, 11 percent in Europe.

As has already been said, we share common health and environmental concerns with people all over the world, and certainly in Africa. If we want to deal with the problems of global warming and climate change, we must deal in partnership with Africa. If we want to deal with a whole array of public health problems that affect not only the children and people of Africa but people throughout the rest of the world, we must do it in partnership with Africa.

Finally, I'd like to just state a simple truth that guides our relations with all nations: Countries that are democratic, peaceful, and prosperous are good neighbors and good partners. They help respond to crises. They respect the environment. They abide by international law. They protect their working people and their consumers. They honor women as well as men. They give all their children a chance.

There are 46 nations represented here today, roughly a quarter of all the countries on Earth. You share a dazzling variety of people and languages and traditions. The world of the 21st century needs your strength, your contribution, your full participation in the struggle to unleash the human potential of people everywhere.

Africa is the ancient cradle of humanity. But it is also a remarkably young continent, full of young people with an enormous stake in the future. When I traveled through the streets of the African cities and I saw the tens of thousands, the hundreds of thousands of young people who came out to see me, I wanted them to have long, full, healthy lives. I tried to imagine what their lives could be like if we could preserve the peace, preserve freedom, extend genuine opportunity, give them a chance to have a life that was both full of liberty and ordered, structured chances—chances that their parents and grandparents did not know.

The Kanuri people of Nigeria, Niger, and Chad say, "Hope is the pillar of the world." The last decade proves that hope is stronger than despair if it is followed by action. Action is the mandate of this conference.

Let us move beyond words and do what needs to be done. For our part, that means debt relief, passage of the "Africa Growth and Opportunity Act," appropriate increases in assistance, and a genuine sense of partnership and openness to future possibilities. For your part, it means continuing the work of building the institutions that bring democracy and peace, prosperity and equal opportunity.

We are ending a decade, the 1990's, that began with a powerful symbol. I will never for-

get the early Sunday morning in 1990 when I got my daughter up and took her down to the kitchen to turn on the television so that she could watch Nelson Mandela walk out of his prison for the last time. She was just a young girl, and I told her that I had the feeling that this would be one of the most important events of her lifetime, in terms of its impact on the imagination of freedom-loving people everywhere.

We could not have known then, either she or I or my wife, that we would have the great good fortune to get to know Mr. Mandela and see his generosity extended to our family and to our child, as it has been to children all over his country. But in that walk, we saw a continent's expression of dignity, of self-respect, of the soaring potential of the unfettered human spirit.

For a decade, now, the people of South Africa and the people of Africa have been trying to make the symbol of that walk real in the lives of all the people of the continent. We still have a long way to go. But let us not forget how far we have come. And let us not forget that greatness resides not only in the people who lead countries and who overcome persecutions but in the heart and mind of every child and every person there is the potential to do better, to reach higher, to fulfill dreams. It is our job to give all the children of Africa the chance to do that.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:38 a.m. in the Loy Henderson Auditorium at the State Department. In his remarks, he referred to Chairman Youssouf Ouedraogo and Secretary General Salim Ahmed Salim, Organization of African Unity (OAU); United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan; and President Nelson Mandela of South Africa. The President also referred to the Economic Community of West Africa Observer Group (ECOMOG) and the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP).